

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 ACDA-10 OES-07 EB-07

USIE-00 COME-00 IO-13 /111 W

-----281841Z 119179 /47

O 281301Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1509

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY VALLETTA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE

COMSIXTHFLT IMMEDIATE

EUCOM IMMEDIATE

SECDEF IMMEDIATE

USDOCOSOUTH IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS TUNIS 3779

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, ENRG, TS, OY, IT

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE AND

AMERICAN TYWGLING SHIP: TUNIS PRESS PLAY, 28 MAY

REF: TUNIS 3778

1. (SUMMARY) ARRIVAL OF US-OWNED/PANAMANIAN REGISTRY DRILLING
SHIP "J.W. BATES" INDISPUTED AREA DOMINATES TUNIS PRESS MAY 28.

ATTENTION GIVEN TO STORY IS UNPRECEDENTED. STORIES FILL FRONT

PAGE OF PARTY DAILY "L'ACTION", WHICH HEADLINES: TUNISIA

RESOLVED TO PUT AN END TO LIBYAN FAIT ACCOMPLI... TUNISIAN

AUTHORITIES SERVE SUMMONS ON DRILLING RIG REQUIRING IT TO

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LEAVE SITE... NOUIRA AND FARHAT REPORT TO CHIEF OF STATE ON

EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION... NOUIRA MEETS WITH AMBASSADOR OF

U.S., MOROCCO, ALGERIA, FRG AND USSR... SECRETARY OF STATE FOR

FOREIGN AFFAIRS TURKI RECEIVES LIBYAN RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE

... TUNISIA RESERVES FREEDOM OF ACTION TO ASSERT ITS RIGHTS

BY THE MEANS IT JUDGES NECESSARY." GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED

"LA PRESSE" HEADLINES ACHOUR STATEMENT THAT "AMERICAN GOVERN-

MENT HAS MADE FORMAL DEMAND TO "PIRATE" DRILLING RIG"; ALSO HEADLINES THAT "WASHINGTON DEPLORES THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN COMPANY." SEMI-INDEPENDENT "LE TEMPS" BANNER HEADLINES THAT "SITUATION IS GRAVE": "AMERICAN DRILLING RIG SURROUNDED BY LIBYAN NAVAL UNITS OCCUPIES DISPUTED ZONE." HEADLINES AND COVERAGE COMPARABLE IN OTHER PAPERS. (END SUMMARY)

2. ALL FRENCH LANGUAGE DAILIES CARRY CLOSELY SIMILAR EDITORIALS HEADLINED "NO TO THE PROVOCATION*"("L'ACTION"; "NO TO FAIT ACCOMPLI*"("LA PRESSE) AND "WHAT DOES LIBYA WANT?" ("LE TEMPS), AND SAME THEME IS EXPRESSED IN ARABIC LANGUAGE PRESS. EDITORIALS CHARACTERIZE LIBYAN ACTION AS "AGGRESSION" AND EMPHASIZE LIBYAN ABOUT-FACE FROM ASSURANCES GIVEN TRADE UNION LEADER ACHOUR AND FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY DURING RECENT VISITS. "L'ACTION" SAYS TUNISIAN GOOD WILL AND PATIENCE CONTINUE IN FACE OF "CLEARLY ESTABLISHED DUPLICITY" OF LIBYAN GOVERNMENT WHICH "BEARS GUILT FOR ALL THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROVOCATION".

3. DECLARATION ATTRIBUTED TO "AUTHORIZED TUNISIAN SOURCES" CARRIED IN ALL PAPERS PROVIDES CHRONOLOGY OF DISPUTE WITH EMPHASIS ON QADHAFI'S RECENT ASSURANCES TO ACHOUR AND CHATTY ABOUT LIBYAN GOVERNMENT'S DISPOSITION TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS IMMEDIATELY. IT SAYS TUNISIAN PUBLIC OPINION WAS LED TO EXPECT IMPROVED RELATIONS AND GOT WAS PROMISED IMMINENT VISIT OF DELEGATION LED BY LIBYAN FOREIGN MINISTER. NEVERTHELESS, ON MAY 25 THE LIBYAN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE IN TUNIS INFORMED TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT THE LIBYAN GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO INSTALL A DRILLING RIG IN THE AREA WHICH HAD BEEN OCCUPIED BY SCARABEO IV"... STILL DENYING THAT

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THIS CONTRADICTED THE ASSURANCES GIVEN CHATTY AND ACHOUR. MEANWHILE, THE DRILLING SHIP, ESCORTED BY LIBYAN NAVAL UNITS INCLUDING A SUBMARINE, WERE EN ROUTE TO THE TUNISIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF, WHERE THE RIG IS NOW BEING INSTALLED. DECLARATION CONCLUDES SAYING "TUNISIA, WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN MOVED BY A SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE, FINDS ITSELF IN THE FACE OF A FAIT ACCOMPLI WHICH IT CAN IN NO MANNER ACCEPT. IT RESERVES THE FREEDOM OF ACTION TO SEE THAT ITS RIGHTS PREVAIL BY WHATEVER MEANS WHICH IT MAY JUDGE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO PUT AN END TO THIS FAIT ACCOMPLI."

4. TREATMENT OF OFFICIAL U.S. OPPOSITION TO ACTION OF READING AND BATES IS EXTENSIVE. STORY IN "LA PRESSE" HAND "L'ACTION", BASED ON UPI DISPATCH, CITES AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC SOURCE IN TUNIS AS DEPLORING THE POSITION OF AMERICAN COMPANY AS CONTRARY TO LONGSTANDING U.S. POLICY OPPOSING SUCH OPERATIONS IN DISPUTED ZONES. IT NOTES THAT A HIGH OFFICIAL OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAD COMMUNICATED THIS POINT OF VIEW TO READING AND BATE, NOTING AMONG OTHER THINGS DANGER TO CREW

OF THE DRILLING RIG. IN "LA PRESSE" INTERVIEW WITH TRADE UNION LEADER ACHOUR HE IS ASKED WHY THE "J.W. BATES" HAS UNDERTAKEN DRILLING FOR LIBYANS IN DISPUTED AREA WHEN AMERICAN OFFICIALS HAD LAST YEAR PERSUADED ANOTHER AMERICAN COMPANY NOT TO UNDERTAKE SUCH WORK FOR TUNISIA. ACHOUR QUOTED AS REPLYING, "IT'S NOW A MATTER OF A REBEL COMPANY WHICH HAS NOT SUBMITTED TO THE ORDERS OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT. IT'S EXACTLY LIKE THE MERCENARIES WHO ARE VERY WELL PAID, FOR THEM IT'S ONLY THE MONEY THAT COUNTS." EFFORTS OF U.S. AMBASSADOR IN MALTA TO DISSUADE READING AND BATES ALSO REFERRED TO IN "LE TEMPS" STORY.

5. NO SPECIFICS PROVIDED ON HOW GOT "SUMMONS" CONVEYED TO CAPTAIN OF "J.W. BATES" BEYOND "L'ACTION'S" STATEMENT THAT "TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES YESTERDAY DELIVERED TO THE COMMANDER OF THE DRILLING PLATFORM A SUMMONS ENJOINING THIS UNIT TO LEAVE THE SITE AND NOT TO PROCEED WITH ANY DRILLING."
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6. STORIES ALSO REFER TO PRIME MINISTER NOURA'S INTERVIEWS MAY 27 WITH AMBASSADORS FROM U.S., FRG, MOROCCO, ALGERIA AND USSR. WHILE ONLY IN CASE OF ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR IS TOPIC OF SHELF DISPUTE SPECIFIED, CLEAR IMPLICATION ITLOMAT SUBJECT WAS MAIN ITEM DISCUSSED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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